

THE BOOK CLUB OF CALIFORNIA

Quar-  
terly **NEWS**  
**LETTER**

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EDITORIAL

ELSEWHERE IN THIS ISSUE reference is made to the fact that during the past year and a half the Club has lost members more rapidly than it has gained them. In that period there has been a net loss of close to fifty. It is hardly necessary to point out that if this trend continues the effect will presently make itself felt in a number of directions.

The Club was founded in the belief that an organization devoted to the interests of book collectors, if it properly performs its functions, can and should be self-supporting.

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It expects to continue to operate on that principle. It believes that those now on its roll are there because they feel they are receiving a proper return for the \$10 dues they pay annually. The Club's entire income, except for necessary operating expenses, is devoted to activities for the benefit of the members. Because this is so, it is obvious that a continued drop in membership dues (the Club's sole source of revenue) can mean only that activities will have to be proportionately curtailed.

The Club is reluctant to begin such cuts. It is not yet convinced that they are necessary. Whether or not they will become necessary, and how soon, depends on whether the decline in the roll is checked and the present vacancies filled. The Club has been in existence, and self-supporting, for twenty-nine years. It is not now asking for contributions. What it is asking is that every member who has an opportunity to do so will mention the Club's activities to those collectors of his acquaintance who are not now members, and that he will exert on them a gentle persuasion to join. A membership application card is enclosed. If members will put it to its intended use the Club's current problems will be promptly solved.

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### BEECHEY OF THE BLOSSOM

"ON THE 26TH (of December 1826) . . . we completed the examination of these parts of the harbor which were likely to be frequented by vessels for some years to come, in which it is proper to mention, in order to give as much publicity to the circumstances as possible, that we discovered a rock between Alceatresses and Yerba Buena Islands, dangerous to both shipping and boats, in consequence of its rising from about seven fathoms so near to



the surface as to occasion strong overfalls with the tides."

This passage is quoted from Captain Beechey's account of his visit to San Francisco Bay in the early years of the last century. The rock to which he refers, lying "between Alceatresses and Yerba Buena Islands," remained a menace to navigation on the bay for forty-four years after Beechey first called the attention of the seamen of the world to it. It became known as Blossom Rock, after Beechey's ship, H.M.S. *Blossom*; it was in fact the only local landmark that commemorated the visit of one of the most observant of the group of early explorers of the coast that included Laperouse, Duhaut-Cilly, Langsdorff, Kotzebue and Vancouver.

Blossom Rock was known, and avoided, by every mariner who entered the bay from the time Captain Beechey discovered it until long after the Gold Rush. It was finally removed, in a very spectacular way, in the spring of 1870. John S. Hittell in his "History of the City of San Francisco" (A. L. Bancroft & Company, 1878) thus describes the operation:

"The city took a holiday to witness the blowing up of Blossom Rock, a submarine reef, the top of which was five feet below high tide, on the line of Davis Street and three quarters of a mile from North Point. A coffer-dam or hollow cylinder was built on the reef; the water having been pumped out, a shaft was sunk down into the rock and galleries were dug for a length of one hundred and forty feet and a width of forty feet, to a depth of thirty seven feet below low tide. The miners having completed their part of the work, and twenty one tons of powder having been distributed in the drifts, on the twenty third of May, in accordance with public notice, and within sight of myriads of people in boats and on the hills, the charge

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was exploded, a column of water one hundred feet in diameter was blown several hundred feet up into the air, and that was the end of the most dangerous obstruction to commerce in the bay of San Francisco. The method of submarine excavation used on Blossom Rock, invented by A. W. Von Schmidt, a San Franciscan, was first applied in making the entrance of the Hunter's Point dry-dock, and is an interesting addition to the science of engineering."

That Frederick William Beechey's eventful stay in California should be remembered today chiefly because a harbor obstruction bearing the name of his ship was dramatically blown up is one of the minor ironies in which history abounds. The expedition had other and more far reaching consequences. One of these was the publication, in London in 1831, of Captain Beechey's own account of his two years of exploration in the North Pacific: "A Narrative of a Voyage to the Pacific and Beering's Strait in the Years 1825-28." Considering this work's scientific importance, the light it throws on the countries and peoples visited, and the uncommonly readable style in which it is written, Beechey's "Narrative" is far less known today than it deserves to be. This is mainly due to the fact that the book has long been hard to come upon. It has not been reprinted since the early 1830s.

It is with the idea of remedying this situation, at least in part, that the Club is publishing during July those parts of the "Narrative" that relate to California and the life and habits of its people as they were observed by Beechey during the eleven weeks he spent in San Francisco and Monterey bays. Members have already received an announcement of this publication, and an order-card. Therefore, only a brief resume of its features need be presented here.



The book contains, as stated, all that section of the Beechey "Narrative" that relates to California. It contains also the first printing of a series of letters relating to the California phase of the expedition (written by Beechey, George Marsh, Purser of the *Blossom*, and D. M. Spence, of Monterey), from the originals in the Bancroft Library, and an informative introduction giving the historical background of the expedition, by Edith M. Coulter.

Of equal importance with the text are the illustrations. One is a reproduction of Beechey's Map of San Francisco Bay, made during the *Blossom's* stay in the harbor and only lately brought to light. There are also four full-page illustrations in color, reproductions of watercolors made by William Smyth, artist of the expedition. These are "The Presidio and Pueblo of Monterey," "H.M.S. Blossom," "The Mission of San Carlos," and "The Bay of Monterey." They are now reproduced for the first time from the originals, and in the original colors.

The book is printed by The Grabhorn Press. The text has been hand-set in Lutetia type and the paper is French hand-made. The page size is 12½ by 9½ inches, the binding is red buckram with a vellum back, with the title stamped in gold on the spine. Three hundred and fifty copies have been printed. The price is \$8.00, plus (for sales in California) 24 cents sales tax.

As this is written—soon after the mailing of the announcements—orders for slightly more than a third of the edition are already on hand. A continued lively response from the members is anticipated, for the book is important as to contents and more than ordinarily attractive from the standpoint of typography.

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### CARLYLE TO HIS PUBLISHER

IN 1843 THOMAS CARLYLE, nearing his fiftieth birthday and with his long struggle for recognition only recently won, delivered to his publisher, the great London firm of Chapman & Hall, the manuscript of a new book, "Past and Present." One of the eminent Scotchman's comparatively minor works (as compared to his "French Revolution" and "Frederick the Great"), "Past and Present" was written during the first seven weeks of 1843 and published in April; in it, states G. K. Chesterton, the author was "preaching a sort of divine disgust" at the confusion and lack of spiritual values of his day in contrast to the simplicity and order of the 12th century.

Due to the success of his "French Revolution," which had appeared a few years earlier, Carlyle by then had an established reputation and a large and growing following. "Past and Present" was in sufficient demand to exhaust the first edition and presently make necessary a second. The latter was an octavo—the first edition was a 12mo.—and it was issued in 1845, the same year that saw the publication of his "Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Papers." From the document here reproduced we learn that the edition was two thousand copies and that the author's payment amounted to one hundred and fifty pounds.

Carlyle's receipt to Chapman & Hall acknowledging the payment of this stipend is interesting for a variety of reasons: for the author's autograph, as illustrating business usages of the day, and for the light it throws on the rate of payment received by important British authors a century ago. Not visible in the facsimile is a revenue stamp embossed in the paper; it shows that the government tax on the receipt amounted to two shillings and



London 28th August. 1845

Devised of Capt. Edward Chapman and  
William Hall, the sum of One hundred  
and fifty pounds - being the subscription  
for a second edition of my work entitled "Pall and  
Pain" of which two thousand copies are printed.

Thomas Carlyle

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sixpence, evidence that business transactions were not free of rather drastic taxation even in that day.

The little paper reads:

London 28th August 1845

Received of Messrs. Edward Chapman and William Hall, the sum of one hundred and fifty pounds, being the consideration for a second edition of my work entitled "Past and Present"—of which two thousand copies are printed.

THOMAS CARLYLE

£150—

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### CALIFORNIA ON CANVAS

THE FIRST THREE PARTS of the 1941 keepsake series were distributed in March and the reaction of the members was distinctly favorable. This confirmed the expectations of those who, having seen the first group of folders in preparation, were convinced that in attractiveness, pictorial interest and historical value this series would be the equal in popularity of any of its predecessors. A second group of three—bringing the series to its half-way point—is now being completed and will have been distributed when this number of the quarterly reaches the members. It is safe to prophesy that they will have an equally cordial welcome.

The following six parts of California on Canvas have now been completed:

Number One (January): Custom House, Monterey. Watercolor. Artist: unknown. Date: About 1875.

Number Two (February): River Bridge, Sacramento. Watercolor. Artist: J. Lamson. Date: 1857.

Number Three (March): Steamer Cornelia. Oil painting. Artist: unknown. Date: About 1855.

Number Four: Telegraph Hill, San Francisco. Oil painting.



Artist: unknown. Date: 1848-49.

Number Five: Yerba Buena. Watercolor. Artist: Jean Jacques Vioget. Date: 1837.

Number Six: Water Flume, Tuolumne. Watercolor. Artist: J. Lamson. Date: 1857.

This series of color reproductions of views of early California landmarks as seen by pioneer artists will be continued in monthly parts during the remainder of 1941. All twelve folders are being designed and executed by The Grabhorn Press. The color work, done by a process originated and perfected by the Press (examples of which have attracted a great deal of favorable comment upon their appearance in several recent Grabhorn books), deserves more than a passing word. It is a method peculiarly appropriate to the present series, for by its use it has been possible to reproduce the subdued colors and soft tones of the old paintings and watercolors with unusual fidelity and effectiveness.

One complete set of California on Canvas will be supplied to each member. In addition, fifty sets were set aside for sale, to members only, at \$5 per set. More than half of these have been subscribed to date. Applications for the remainder will be entered strictly in the order received.

Slipcases for containing these 1941 folders—uniform with those supplied for the earlier series—are now being completed and are offered to members at cost. The delivery of the finished cases has been delayed because of the fact that the binding cloth used in the earlier series is no longer manufactured and some difficulty was encountered finding a satisfactory cloth to use in its place. This difficulty has now been overcome, however, and the orders now on hand will be promptly filled, as will future orders.

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as well. The slipcases are priced as follows: for all-cloth covering, \$2; for cloth with morocco back, \$3.



### A MEMORIAL TO ALBERT M. BENDER

THE CLUB IS GLAD to bring the following self-explanatory letter to the attention of the members:

Friends of Albert M. Bender:

When Albert M. Bender passed away on March 4th there arose spontaneously the desire to commemorate his life by some form of memorial. A committee of members was created representing some of the manifold fields in which he was keenly interested and in which he made his superb contribution to the life of California.

At a meeting of this committee it was decided that the memorial ought to be one appropriate to the man and his life. It was felt that nothing made of brick, stone or concrete would be fitting. He always sought to help human beings, especially those of promise in literature and the fine arts. Accordingly the committee concluded that the sum which is gathered be used for the making of grants to aid creative talent. Each year certain fields of art within the range of Albert Bender's greatest interests will be chosen; in these, "grants-in-aid" will be awarded. The number and size of these grants will depend upon the amount subscribed. The Fund, which it is hoped will reach \$50,000, will be administered by a permanent group of Trustees, and contributions are deductible from State and Federal taxes.

We are now coming to you as one of Albert Bender's friends to bring this plan to your attention with the earnest hope that you will wish to participate. In one sense he needs no memorial since the memory of his life and



services will last at least as long as those of us who knew him will live and breathe. But in human hearts there is always the desire to express in some form appreciation for a life such as his, and this is the basis of our appeal for funds to commemorate in this appropriate manner what he has meant to the city, to the state, and above all, to each one of us. . . .

MONROE E. DEUTSCH

Chairman

Members who may wish to participate in this well-deserved tribute should address their contributions to James K. Moffitt, Treasurer, Albert M. Bender Memorial Trust, 311 California Street, San Francisco.

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## ELECTED TO MEMBERSHIP

THE FOLLOWING new members have been elected since March:

<i>Member</i>		<i>Sponsor</i>
Bruce Belt	Los Angeles, Cal.	Dr. Elmer Belt
Dr. Le Roy H. Briggs	San Francisco	Dr. H. A. R. Krautzmänn
Herman Cohen	New York, N. Y.	Oscar Lewis
Mrs. Ray E. Cronemiller	Exeter, Cal.	R. E. Combs
Mrs. William Brown Meloney	New York, N. Y.	Alfred Sutro
Lester Mittau	San Francisco, Cal.	Oscar Lewis
Frank A. West	Stockton, Cal.	Mrs. Frank A. West
Yale University Library	New Haven, Conn.	Oscar Lewis

The total membership, as of June 15, 1941, is 547, a decrease of five since the listing in March, and of nearly fifty from the figure of eighteen months ago. For comment on this loss of membership and its implications, as well as suggestions for remedying the situation, see page one of this issue.

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## MISCELLANY

At the May meeting of the directors, Morgan A. Gunst was appointed by President Sutro to fill the va-

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cancy on the board caused by the death of Albert M. Bender. Mr. Gunst, a charter member of the Club and a bibliophile of long standing, served for several years as a member of the board in the early 1920s.

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THE BOOK CLUB OF CALIFORNIA, founded in 1912, is a non-commercial, non-profit association of booklovers and collectors who have a special interest in Pacific Coast literature and fine printing.

Its chief aims are to further the interests of book collectors in the West, to promote an understanding and appreciation of fine books, and to enhance the pleasures that come from their collection and study. These aims find expression in the following activities:

**PUBLICATIONS:** The Club publishes two or three books a year, in editions of from 250 to 350 copies, which are sold at cost, and only to members. The publications are selected examples of the work of the foremost fine printers of the West. **KEEPSAKES:** Each year the Club issues and distributes to members a series of keepsakes, in six or twelve parts, each of which is designed by a different Pacific Coast printer. **NEWS-LETTER** This quarterly keeps members informed of Club activities and presents in each number brief papers on various phases of book collecting, with special reference to the interests of Western collectors. The News-Letter, like the keepsakes, is supplied without cost to the members.

The Club is limited to six hundred members. When vacancies exist membership is open to all who are in sympathy with its aims and whose applications are approved by the Board of Directors. Regular Membership involves no responsibilities beyond payment of the annual dues of \$10.00, there being no initiation fee. Dues date from the month of the member's election.

The Club's policies and activities are governed by a board of directors, elected annually. The present officers and directors are: Alfred Sutro, President; Flodden W. Heron, Vice-President; Oscar Lewis, Secretary; E. V. Weller, Allen L. Chickering, C. O. G. Miller, James K. Moffitt, Morgan A. Gunst, Directors.